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SUBJECT: POLL: AUSTRALIANS MORE FAVORABLE TOWARD U.S., WARY  
OF CHINA

11. (U) SUMMARY: According to the 2008 annual poll by the Lowy Institute in Sydney, support among Australians for the United States has risen, while the public has become increasingly wary of China. Support for Australia's security alliance with the United States has reached its highest level since the Lowy Poll began in 2005. However, there is increasing opposition to Australia's military involvement in Afghanistan, and approximately two-thirds of those surveyed believe Australia takes too much notice of the United States in developing foreign policy. Trust in China to act responsibly has declined. A majority believe Australia should join with other nations to limit China's influence and a third believe the rise of China is a threat to Australia's vital interest. Sixty-two percent of those polled said the Australian Government was not doing enough to pressure China to improve human rights. This poll was taken in July, prior to the media focus on the financial crisis in the United States. END SUMMARY.

VIEWS TOWARD U.S. IMPROVE BUT SUPPORT FOR AFGHANISTAN FALLS

12. (U) The Lowy Institute has conducted an annual survey of Australian attitudes toward foreign policy and other countries since 2005. In 2007, 60 percent of those surveyed had a favorable attitude toward the United States, below the UK at 75 percent, Singapore at 64 percent and Japan at 63 percent. China was at 56 percent. This year, support for the U.S. has risen to 64 percent, equal to Japan and only slightly below Singapore. China remains at 56 percent. Support for the ANZUS Alliance has bounced back from earlier declines. This year, 76 percent believe it is fairly or very important for Australia's security. It was 72 percent in 2005; 70 percent in 2006, and 63 percent in 2007.

13. (U) The United States is trusted "a great deal" by 24 percent to act responsibly in the world - significantly ahead of China, Japan, Russia and India. This is a five point improvement since 2006, the last time this question was asked. However, 65 percent believe Australia takes too much notice of the United States in formulating its foreign policy - little change from previous years. Fifty-six percent of those polled are against continuing Australian involvement in Afghanistan. This has increased from 46 percent in 2007.

NERVOUS ABOUT CHINA

14. (U) While a majority say China's growth has been good for Australia, there is growing apprehension about its increasing influence in international affairs. Thirty-four percent view China as a "critical threat" to Australia's vital interest - an increase of 9 points since 2006. Only 7 percent trust China "a great deal" to act responsibly in the world (no change), while 21 percent trust China "not at all" - an

increase of 10 points. Fifty-one percent believe Australia should join with other countries to limit China's influence. Sixty-four percent believe Australia's interests would be harmed if China's influence increased and 60 percent believe China's aim is to dominate Asia. Sixty-two percent of those surveyed believe Australia is not doing enough to pressure China on human rights.

CLIMATE CHANGE BIG ISSUE AND SO IS WHALING AND  
NONPROLIFERATION

15. (U) When asked what were the greatest threats facing Australia, the survey's respondents listed the increasing scarcity of water (83 percent), global warming (66), and international terrorism (66). Fifty-eight percent of those surveyed thought Australia should do more to pressure Japan to stop all whaling, even at the risk of losing valuable trade deals. A huge number, 88 percent, agreed Australia should not export uranium to countries that have not signed the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty.

CHANGE OF GOVERNMENTS A SIGNIFICANT FACTOR?

16. (SBU) COMMENT: Since the 2007 poll, the major event in Australia has been a change of government from the conservative John Howard administration to the government of Labor Party leader Kevin Rudd. The Rudd Government has also withdrawn Australian combat troops from their unpopular deployment to Iraq and signed the Kyoto Protocol. The popular Rudd is a strong supporter of the United States, but his government is perceived by many Australians as being more

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independent in its foreign policy. The uptick in support for the U.S. may also be related to the growing anxiety about the rise of China. There is also intense interest here in the upcoming U.S. elections and this may have also affected the poll figures regarding the United States. The survey was conducted prior to widespread coverage of the U.S. financial crisis.

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